

Going forward, we are going to need fossil fuels for probably as far as the eye can see. We are going to need natural gas. We are going to need petroleum. We are going to need them for our homes. We are going to need them for our buildings. We need them for our businesses.

Let me just tell you something else. The State of Delaware is sinking. My State is sinking. Seas around us are rising. My State is sinking. Down in the Gulf of Mexico, the State of Louisiana, during the next 100 minutes, they are going to lose a piece of land to the ocean the size of a football field.

A month or two ago, when they had the big French bicycle race that they have every year, they had to literally stop the race in parts of the Tour de France because the road was melting.

We are seeing sea levels rise. It is not imaginary. It is actually happening. In 10, 20, 30, 40 years—when these pages down here are my age—it is going to be one heck of a problem. And the question is, Are we going to do anything about it? Are we going to do anything about it in ways that create jobs and economic opportunity?

We can walk and chew gum at the same time, we can address climate change, we can address global warming, and we can create jobs and economic opportunities. There are plenty of ways to do that. We have shown that in the IRA, or the Inflation Reduction Act, and also in the bipartisan infrastructure bill. We need to do more of the same.

That is not why I came here. I came here to talk about three separate but important topics.

RESPECT FOR MARRIAGE ACT

Madam President, let me start by turning to the tragedy that took place just a week and a half ago. On the morning of November 2, the community of Colorado Springs, CO, woke up to the devastating news that 5 people were killed, and another 25 were injured, at the hands of a shooter.

While we are still learning the details about this horrific incident, this much is clear: The shooter chose to target an LGBTQ-friendly establishment.

Hate has no place in this nation. It never has and, hopefully, never will. It is up to each of us as individuals to root out hate when we see it and enact change in order to fix it.

It is not every day that the Senate comes together to pass bipartisan legislation, although we do it more than most people would expect. But, yesterday, we did just that with a majority vote of 61 to 36 to reaffirm to our Nation's LGBTQ community that we believe that every adult deserves a right to marry whom they love—no matter their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

I was honored to lend my support for the bipartisan Respect for Marriage Act to protect that sacred and fundamental right to marry for all Americans in the First State and throughout our country.

This is a historic moment for our country and a testament to what can happen when policymakers embrace the golden rule: Treat other people the way you want to be treated. The Golden Rule is in every sacred scripture of every major religion in the world. I don't care if you are a Jew. I don't care if you are Protestant. I don't care if you are Catholic. I don't care if you are Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim. They all have the Golden Rule in there: Treat other people the way you want to be treated. And I think that is really the thread that underlies the legislation that we enacted yesterday with bipartisan support.

Madam President, as many of us in this Chamber know, for the past 7 years, marriage equality has been the law of the land. It has been the law of the land. It is nothing new. It has been the law of the land for the last 7 years, thanks to the Supreme Court decision in something called Obergefell—I mangled that; I am sure others have as well—v. Hodges. That is the decision of 7 years ago. The basis of this is the law of the land.

Former Justice Anthony Kennedy, who was appointed by President Reagan, wrote in his majority opinion of that—and I am going to quote him. He said:

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family.

His words—I could not have said it better.

Americans deserve the constitutional right to enter into that profound union, marriage, with the person they love—and the person who loves them as well.

However, earlier this summer, the Supreme Court overturned nearly 50 years of precedent protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions. And tucked away in that radical opinion, Justice Thomas cast doubt on whether the Constitution protects marriage equality.

Let me be clear. Yesterday's bipartisan vote to protect same-sex marriage said that we are not going back.

LGBTQ Americans can now rest assured they are afforded equal dignity under the law. I look forward to this bill being signed into law by President Biden soon to make it official.

RAILWAY LABOR MANAGEMENT DISPUTE

Madam President, let me move along to my second topic, which I hope can yield similar levels of bipartisan agreement, and that is support for our Nation's rail workers.

Let me first state my strong support for freight rail transportation and the hard-working men and women who keep our Nation's trains—both passenger trains and freight trains—both rolling fine and running on time.

This issue is personal to me, not only as someone who commutes on an Amtrak train most days to work here at our Nation's capital but as the grandson of a railroader. My grandfather was a fireman on the B&O Railroad in West

Virginia for many, many years. My sister and I would love to listen to my grandfather tell us great stories about railroading in those days. I have had a love affair with trains ever since I was a little kid.

Many of us know that freight rail keeps our economy moving. I didn't know that when I was a kid, but it does. It did then, and it does now. We don't often discuss that freight rail does so in a way that is better for our planet—better for our planet.

Let me tell you what I am talking about. Moving freight by rail is some four times more fuel efficient than moving freight on the highway. I will say that again. Moving freight by rail is some four times more fuel efficient than moving freight on the highway. In fact, freight trains can move—think about this—1 ton of freight from Washington, DC, to Boston, MA—1 ton with 1 gallon of diesel fuel, 1 gallon.

This morning, I rode on an Amtrak train with hundreds of people on board. The train was sold out, and we did it using no diesel fuel. We used electricity. A lot of it was generated by nuclear, offshore wind, and so forth.

At a time when scientists tell us that we must dramatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions—and we must—in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we can't afford to shut down the most fuel-efficient way of moving freight over land in this country.

Freight rail isn't just important for reducing emissions but also critical for keeping our economy humming. Our Nation's most trusted economists all agree that a rail shutdown would be devastating for our economy—devastating. Hundreds of thousands of Americans, many of them union workers, could be put out of work in just the first 2 weeks of a shutdown. And a shutdown could also leave many communities without the necessary chemicals for maintaining clean drinking water. That is why President Biden is calling on us in Congress to pass legislation immediately—not next week, not next month, immediately—to adopt a tentative agreement made in September.

He did not come to this conclusion lightly and neither do I. President Biden is, by almost any estimation, the most pro-labor President we have had in my lifetime. Secretary Walsh is the first union leader to lead the Department of Labor in more than half a century. People think he was the former mayor of Boston. No, no, he was also the president of a major labor union in Massachusetts. Both of them are saying that Congress should intervene in supporting the agreement that 8 out of the 12 rail labor unions are supporting.

The contract agreement that the Biden administration helped negotiate recognizes the importance and dignity of our Nation's rail workers. The deal provides a historic 24-percent pay raise for rail workers and improved healthcare benefits. Eight out of the